

Editorials

Bishops Blessed With Consistency

The strong language used by our bishops in calling for a halt in production and deployment of nuclear weapons in their unprecedented pastoral letter, "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response," should be welcome even to those who do not espouse that essential position.

By taking such a strong position on the sanctity of life, the bishops lend powerful credibility to some of their other teachings, perhaps most strikingly their opposition to abortion. Those who criticize the bishops for speaking out against abortion cannot point to any equivocation on the bishops' part regarding nuclear warfare. Those who do not like the fact that these Church leaders oppose capital punishment can no longer point to a disparate view on arms as weakening the bishops' position.

The bishops know full well that their pastoral letter will be a bitter pill for many who fear disarming, and not without reason, in the face of the threat from other quarters in the world, most notably the Soviet Union. It would be wise for all to remember that the bishops do not call for unilateral disarmament but they are urging the United States to take a leadership role in reversing the world's madcap dash to nuclear obliteration.

As for those who prefer to take their moral medicine coated in the sweet skin of tradition, the

bishops gird their position by pointing out that "good ends, defending one's country, protecting freedom, etc., cannot justify immoral means, the use of weapons which kill indiscriminately and threaten whole societies." That basic moral is as Christian as "love your enemy" and as Catholic as Sunday Mass.

And that very point is equally valid in the abortion, euthanasia and death penalty contentions. Would that those who accept such violent means as societal remedies could realize this.

Despite the expected criticism of those in government and even of those of their own flock, the bishops have taken an open, forthright and moral stand in a world grown inured to labyrinthian logic and covert dealings. They have taken a stand that is open to criticism but in doing so they are teaching that morality does not depend on popularity. This by itself should be refreshing to all. Perhaps in the end theirs will be a voice crying in the wilderness; that to a large extent that will depend on American Catholics. By supporting their leaders on this critical issue, perhaps we can effect a needed change in the world's direction.

But the bishops were speaking to more than Catholics; their message was also meant for the world at large. Many of other persuasions will be studying the document and hopefully lending their affirmation.

It also would be pleasant if some of the critics of the Church would recognize the nice consistency of the American bishops in their plea for the regard for the sanctity of life. Those groups who grow financially by appealing to anti-Catholic sentiment through depiction of the bishops as cold, die-hard reactionaries should admit the folly of their diatribe.

Pro-abortionists who have hinted at the inconsistency of the Church should not keep quiet in view of this further evidence of the truly pro-life sentiment of the teaching authority of the Church.

Indeed, Catholics have every reason to be proud of the way their leaders conducted themselves on this delicate issue. They did so openly, even airing their disagreements. They did so collegially, seeking the opinions of their "constituencies," but eventually biting the bullet (if that phrase may still be used) on the issue. And they spoke with courage, a virtue often left by the wayside of this world's pragmatic peregrinations.

Meatless Fridays

Abstaining from meat on Friday, despite the practice of recent years, has continued to be encouraged by the Church as a worthwhile discipline. Given the option, most Catholics have, however, discontinued the practice.

As it turns out, as with many religious dietary laws, more than discipline is involved. The foods we turn to in place of meat, such as fish or cheese or even pasta, are healthier, dieticians have learned in recent years.

With these things in mind, and given the tension of the modern world armed to the teeth, Bishop Matthew H. Clark's suggestion that we might give up meat on Friday, or some other form of abstinence or fast in a quest for peace is a very plausible idea for a variety of reasons.

It should be a topic for discussion at the family supper table and perhaps from the pulpit.

and Opinions

U.S. Policy Protested

Editor:
We protest the now widely documented efforts of the U.S. government to "destabilize" the government of Nicaragua. Not only are such activities explicitly forbidden by U.S. law but are against the best interests of the peoples of both countries.

This is not defend every action of the present government of Nicaragua. It has made its share of mistakes since it came to power in 1979. However, it is a vast improvement in every way over the previous regime of the Somoza dynasty which for over 40 years exploited the country for its own profit — with, unfortunately, the support of the U.S. government.

A sensible course for the U.S. would be to support and encourage the best elements and tendencies within the Sandinista government — not to attempt its overthrow. The history of the last 20 years shows how disastrous U.S. intervention is likely to be — in terms of both the welfare of the Nicaraguan people and the legitimate concerns of the U.S.

Accordingly, we call upon our representatives and senators to oppose the present course of U.S. policy toward Nicaragua and seek through the Congress a constructive alternative — which will protect the right of the Nicaraguan people to self-determination and strengthen the development of democratic values and institutions in Central America.

The Rev. Frank P. Snow
Chairman
Helen Rice
Betty Anderson
The Rev. Juan Marquez
M. Sue Burdick
Eunice Jelsma
The Rev. Linda Brebner

St. Catherine: A Reflection

EDITOR:
A local press report on the

anniversary celebration of "Fire in the Thornbush" made reference to the fact that the celebration was held on the Feast of St. Catherine of Siena.

Three contrasts come to mind when I think of this great saint and her modern-day counterparts, both male and female.

St. Catherine was deeply infused by the Holy Spirit. This came only after much self-affliction, self-sacrifice and prayer. Her personal sufferings are in opposition to today's "Church Saints," who seek the gifts of the Holy Spirit through committees, counsels and consensus.

Secondly, she devoted part of her active life in successfully moving a weak pope from a decadent court in Avignon to his rightful seat, as the Vicar of Christ, in Rome. The moderns are hopeful to move a strong pope from Rome to elsewhere.

Thirdly, our Virgin-Doctor Saint spent much time and effort, unsuccessfully, in trying to arouse and unite feuding governments and city-states to mount a crusade against the Mohammedans, who she deemed a great threat to Christianity. Today, we see the "saints" moving to divide a somewhat unified government while permitting intense latitude to and encroachment by the greatest known threat to Christianity — Marxist/Communism.

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Editor's Note: The letter also was signed by Ronald John Buttarazzi and Joseph A. Fischette.

Helping Poor Not Political

EDITOR:
Under World, Nation, People, Page 2 of the March 30 Courier-Journal, there is a short account of the Chilean government's expulsion of three missionary priests. I feel it necessary to comment on the expulsion lest your readers pass it off as a necessary measure to stem Communist influence by for-

eigners.

Those priests took so seriously their option for the poor — Christ's option, too — that, with the blessing of their superiors and the vicar of their zone, they gave up even the lesser hardships of life in an established parish structure to live in the same type of housing as the people among whom they settled, and, through their sharing the same difficulties as their neighbors, gained their confidence and love. Thus they were able to be effective messengers of the Good News of Jesus in the midst of extreme poverty and misery.

Their crime of engaging in activities "contrary to the public order" was not spelled out. Actually, they have been following the guidelines set out by the bishops' conference and our valiant Cardinal Raul Silva. So many quotes from the hierarchy in support of the priests could be cited, but I will use only some of what the vicar general of the archdiocese of Santiago, Msgr. Juan de Castro, said about the expulsion:

"The Church is convinced that they are not political activists. They can say inadequate things; they can make mistakes, but this can happen to anyone. No one is exempt."

"The fundamental thing, both serious and sad, is that there is no understanding of the Church's work after centuries of evangelization. To be on the side of the poor is considered to be political. One mayor said, 'The only reason that they live in a p o b l a c i o n (poor neighborhood) is for political interests.' He can't comprehend that there is an act of immense love in sharing the same fortune as the poor and from that position to help promote human values. To help people to find something to eat is subversive for some."

Here are a few comments from the comments of people who have suffered the loss of the three dedicated priests:

Of Desmond: "He, with all the people, had a common pot. He went through all the red tape at the Vicariate (of Solidarity). The people gave him the idea. He asked

permission because he never did anything without permission."

Of Brian: "He lent us a room where the people could meet to talk a little. This served as therapy for those without work. When we got together, he insisted on the necessity of creating workshops for carpentry and for arts and crafts."

Of Brendan: "His pastoral message was that the people grow and encounter the Lord; that they be Christians all the way through. He didn't want half-hearted Christians of just Sunday Mass, but active in the community."

I speak for all the Rochester Mercies here when I say thanks to all the people of the diocese who have generously provided for us so that we have the privilege of living and working among the Chileans who struggle to keep alive and on the way to the Father, and for the opportunity to associate with such conscientious missionaries as Desmond, Brian and Brendan.

Please continue to pray for our people and us as do for you.

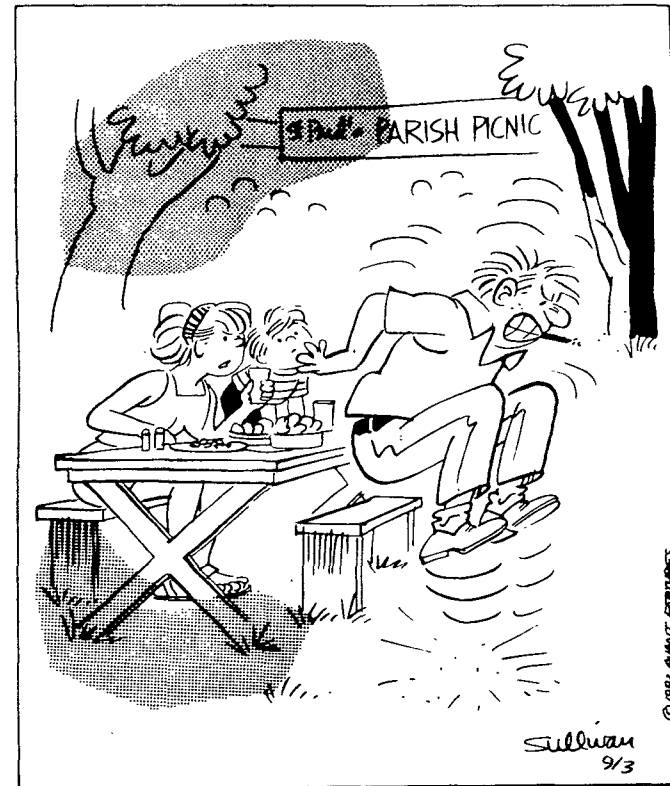
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The Letter To Moynihan

EDITOR:
Professor Jean Cardinali, in a recent letter (April 20), advised readers to write Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan telling him, in essence, to stop sending aid to those forces fighting the Communist-supported rebels in Central America.

During the Vietnam War, similar statements were voiced often while anti-Communist forces were severely criticized for alleged and real human rights violations.

But we know to some degree what happened in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia after the Communist takeover, particularly in Cambodia where millions of



unarmed civilians were murdered.

In Laos and Vietnam, the situation was and is not that much better considering the thousands of refugees and "boat people" who have fled Communist brutality.

Is this what we want for Central America where already the Marxist government is oppressing the Indian population and persecuting religion?

As in Vietnam, the leftist guerrillas in Central America are terrorizing the civilians in order to gain control of the government.

So when we write that Letter to Sen. Moynihan, let's tell him that we support any action by our government that would remove the threat of Communist tyranny from Central America.

Indeed, it is our moral duty to do so.

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Altar Girls Not Allowed

EDITOR:
In answer to A. T. Pimore's letter, April 27,

concerning altar girls.

If we belong to a club or an organization we are to obey the laws. If we choose not to, we drop out. Our homes have rules, we expect each one in the family to obey them.

The Catholic Church is not a democracy. No one forces us as adults to be Catholics. We are free to belong to the faith or not. However, we must as professed Catholics obey the laws set forth by the pope. Christ gave Peter, our first pope, complete authority over his Church. Never has it been otherwise.

Lucifer fell from heaven because he put himself above God. Are we not setting ourselves above obeying God's representative on earth? The pope's laws are God's laws.

When we say we are Catholics we must listen to all of the laws set down by our Church's head. The pope, being the church's head, has decreed that there shall be no altar girls.

In closing, I feel everyone should read Ezekial 9.

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